

## Vermont State Board of Education Monthly Report – March 2010

### *From the Chair*

At its meeting on March 16, 2010, the State Board of Education addressed the following topics:

**Opportunity to Learn (Report of the Education Transformation Policy Commission)** – The State Board continues its discussion of the *Opportunity to Learn* Report, focusing on *Section II: Learning Expectations for a New Generation*. The report focuses on how every student can attain 21st century skills when provided with focused and personalized opportunities for learning. To see the full report, go to: [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/transformation/commission\\_resources.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/transformation/commission_resources.html). The Board will continue its discussions at its April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Vermont's Race to the Top Application –**

The Board voted to support the Vermont Department of Education's *Race to the Top* (RttT) application to the federal Department of Education, due June 2, 2010. The potential is for up to \$75 million over four years for state and local capacity building and implementation of school and district -wide transformation efforts, including the implementation of components of the Learning Expectations, Education Quality and Educator Quality sections of the *Opportunity to Learn* report. This includes:

- consistent statewide data systems;
- common standards and assessments;
- personalized learning approaches;
- common evaluation systems for teachers and principals;
- educator preparation, mentoring and leadership development programs;
- support for school improvement;
- early childhood efforts;
- STEM strategies; and
- secondary transformation strategies such as dual enrollment, distance learning opportunities, technology to support education.

For more information, contact Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf ([Rae.Knopf@state.vt.us](mailto:Rae.Knopf@state.vt.us)), or go to [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/recovery\\_act.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/recovery_act.html)

### **National Common Core Standards Initiative –**

Vermont is one of 48 states that signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) in 2009 to work with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors' Association (NGA) in the development and adoption of a package of national common standards K-12, culminating in College and Career-readiness Standards in mathematics, reading, writing, speaking and listening, a requirement linked to the acceptance of significant state funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This initiative, led by NGA and CCSSO, is working with Achieve, ACT and the College Board, among others, and is scheduled to be finalized in early spring.

The Common Core Standards are internationally benchmarked and designed to better prepare our young people for 21<sup>st</sup> century college and career opportunities. The first component of the Common Core Standards, the College and Career-readiness Standards, were released for public comment in September. They are available at: <http://www.corestandards.org/>. These standards define the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses and work training programs.

Additionally, the Common Core group has been developing K-12 standards. Vermont Department of Education (VTDOE) staff have participated in confidential review sessions and provided comment over several iterations of these standards. The College and Career-readiness standards were found to be reasonably aligned and a useful extension of Vermont's current end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade expectations. VTDOE reviewers have seen significant improvement in the K-12 standards and are optimistic that the version for public comment – available for review at <http://www.corestandards.org/> - will be even stronger in both content and format.

Upon finalization of the Common Core package, VTDOE will work with its partner states in the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) and Vermont stakeholders to conduct a complete alignment of our current *Framework*

*of Standards and Learning Opportunities* and associated Grade Expectations in mathematics and literacy with the Common Core. This formal process is designed to lead to State Board adoption by the end of 2010.

Once adopted, however, the work truly begins as educators in Vermont implement these standards across all learning environments. Student learning against 21<sup>st</sup> century standards will also need to be meaningfully assessed in a balanced system of national, state and local measures of student performance. The VTDOE will work with key associations, Vermont practitioners, and the broad range of stakeholders PK-16 to ensure the successful implementation of new standards and effective and appropriate methods of measurement for a variety of purposes; e.g., improving instruction; determining student proficiency in all critical standards, including those best measured by performance tasks; and program and school accountability.

An FAQ document with the information that is known at this point is available at: [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm\\_curriculum.html#cc\\_faq](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_curriculum.html#cc_faq). Please feel free to contact Gail Taylor (802 828-5158 or [gail.taylor@state.vt.us](mailto:gail.taylor@state.vt.us)) or Marty Gephart (802-828-1462 or [marty.gephart@state.vt.us](mailto:marty.gephart@state.vt.us)) to learn more about this work.

### ***From the Board***

Kathy Larsen reported on the February 18-19 NASBE regional Common Core meeting in Philadelphia she attended along with member Don Collins and Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf. She noted that the national Common Core is now out for public comment (see <http://www.corestandards.org/>).

Larsen also reported on the March 5 New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC) meeting in Boston which she attended, along with Rae Ann Knopf and Armando Vilaseca and other members of the Vermont NESSC committee.

Chair Fayneese Miller reported that she testified before the House Education Committee on March 11. The primary focus of the committee's discussion was the 2008 Business Education Alliance report, which addressed multiple areas: appointment and selection of the commissioner;

selection and constituency of Board members (i.e., should they represent particular categories). Miller reported that she did not speak in favor of proposal, noting that it doesn't allow for a public board nor does it include student representation.

### ***From the Commissioner***

#### **Tier I, Tier II and Tier III School**

**Determination Process** – The department has created two documents designed to clarify the recent designation of the state's 10 "persistently low-achieving schools." This ranking was a requirement of the U.S. Department of Education (USED), and the determination process used in Vermont was reviewed and approved by USED in January 2010. The 10 designated schools are eligible for further federal funding and support from the Vermont Department of Education (VTDOE). Application for funding and participation is a local school board decision. If any of these 10 schools apply for funds, it is with the agreement they will follow one of four school improvement models defined by the USED. The VTDOE is providing technical assistance to the superintendents of all 10 affected schools and will continue to do so throughout the application process and the life of the grant. View the complete memo and accompanying information at [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept\\_recovery\\_act/sfsf.html#determination](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept_recovery_act/sfsf.html#determination).

#### **National Center of Education and the Economy (NCEE) State Board Examination Consortium: NCEE President Marc Tucker Coming to Vermont**

– On February 17, eight states announced they will join with the NCEE to make available to schools in their states internationally recognized instructional systems and examinations. The goal is to dramatically increase the number of students who leave high school ready to succeed in college. Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont will work with NCEE through a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to improve the performance of high school students in these eight states by adopting powerful instructional systems that actually set the international standards. This is an exciting opportunity for Vermont to participate with seven other states in piloting some of the best instructional systems and examinations with the

intent of dramatically increasing the number of students who leave high school ready to succeed in college. The focus for Vermont is on allowing high schools that choose to participate to adopt some of the best (and proven) instructional practices in the world, to provide a powerful system of support to our struggling students, our most able students, and everyone in between, and to motivate our high school students to take tough courses and study hard in school. This is an opportunity for schools as they look to differentiate themselves. Participation by schools in this effort is entirely voluntary, and only students who choose to will participate. Marc Tucker will be in Vermont on Tuesday, April 13, and will meet with interested superintendents and principals, as well as the State Board of Education. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please use this link for location, time and registration information: [http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/dept/commissioner\\_memos/educ\\_memo\\_031010\\_ncee\\_invite.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/dept/commissioner_memos/educ_memo_031010_ncee_invite.pdf)

***From the Department***

**NAEP Scores Released** – Reading scores for Vermont students were among the highest in the country on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), released March 24th by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES). Overall, only Massachusetts outperformed Vermont on the fourth-grade test, while no other state outperformed Vermont at the eighth-grade level. View the complete release at: [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/press\\_releases.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/press_releases.html). Contact: Michael Hock at (802) 828-3115 or [michael.hock@state.vt.us](mailto:michael.hock@state.vt.us); or Jill Remick at (802) 828-3154 or [jill.remick@state.vt.us](mailto:jill.remick@state.vt.us)

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**For additional information on upcoming Department of Education sponsored events for Winter/Spring 2010**, visit <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/calendar.html>. The calendar is updated regularly.

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**For more information on the Vermont State Board of Education**, visit: <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/mainboard.html>.

**To view approved minutes of SBE meetings:** <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#approved>.

**To view State Board of Education’s Monthly Reports:** [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#monthly\\_reports](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#monthly_reports)

**2009-2010 State Board of Education Meeting Dates:** April 13; May 18; June 22

